



'Discriminatory bond rule sends out wrong message'

EasternEye

Editor in Chief: Ramniklal Solanki CBE
020 7654 7754
Managing Editor: Kalpesh R Solanki
020 7654 7728
Executive Editor: Shailesh R Solanki
020 7654 7779

General enquiries: 020 7928 1234

All e-mails: first.name.surname@amg.biz
Website: www.easterneye.eu

NEWSDESK

Consultant Editor: Howard Robin 020 7654 7750

Associate Editor: Rithika Siddhartha

020 7654 7738

E-Guide Editor: Asjad Nazir 020 7654 7790

Senior Reporter: Nadeem Badshah
020 7654 7772

Sports Reporter / Sub Editor: Ronnie Ruff

020 7654 7760 / sports@easterneye.eu

Reporter: Imran Choudhury 020 7654 7758

Sub Editor: Jayanti Venkateshwaran

020 7654 7735 / jayanti.venkat@amg.biz

Designer: Sunil Khatri

ADVERTISING

Associate Publisher: Paul Gray

020 7654 7781 / paul@gg2.net

Head of Sales - Consumer: Prif Viswanandan

020 7654 7782 / prif.vis@amg.biz

Advertising Manager: Jayanti Solanki

020 7654 7762 / jayanti.solanki@amg.biz

INDIA SALES

Chief Manager Operation: Kalpesh Pandya

020 3002 0014 / kalpesh.pandya@amgindia.biz

Nitin Gangal

020 3371 0597 / nitin.gangal@amgindia.biz

Indravadan Chavda

+91 9033607070

indravadan.chavda@amgindia.biz

Digital Manager: Aditya Solanki

020 7654 7784 / aditya@amg.biz

VP Operations: Kulwant Singh 020 7654 7725

Accounts: Kamal Desai 020 7654 7748

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Circulation Manager: Saurin Shah
saurin.shah@amg.biz / 020 7654 7737

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NEW VISA PLANS FOR JUST ASIAN SUBCONTINENT AND TWO AFRICAN NATIONS

by NADEEM BADSHAH

CONTROVERSIAL plans forcing south Asians to pay a £3,000 deposit to enter Britain have been slammed as "unfair" by campaigners.

Visitors from countries including India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka will have to pay the fee from November. They will lose the money if they fail to return to their home countries by the time their visa has expired.

The pilot scheme, which only includes four countries from Asia and two from Africa, has been criticised by campaign groups and MPs.

A spokeswoman for the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants pressure group told *Eastern Eye*: "This pilot scheme is another example of a measure that hasn't been thought through properly and is discriminatory. Who will run this scheme? The Home Office is in shambles and is currently unable to cope with its existing caseload."

"By focusing on Africa and the Asian subcontinent, it risks creating a perception that all people from there are scroungers and law breakers. This policy has a worryingly racist tone to it and is insulting to 100,000s settled Asian and African families in the UK."

The new rules affect visitors aged over 18 on six-month visit visas. The countries are being targeted by the Home Office because of the high number of visitor visa applications. Last year, 296,000 visitors granted six-month visas were from India, 53,000 from Pakistan and 14,000 each from Bangladesh and Sri Lanka.

Amit Kapadia, executive director of the Highly Skilled Migrants Programme Forum, told *EE*: "I find it quite discriminatory that



only nationals of African and Asian countries are being targeted. Furthermore, the government has already introduced income thresholds in July 2012 for immigrants who intend to sponsor their spouse or parent to the UK.

"It is well known that the people falling foul of these changes will be ethnic minorities, as they are the ones who are usually on lower incomes due to discrimination in employment opportunities."

"These new changes mean the bond money would make it even more difficult for immigrants to invite their family members to visit them in the UK on a temporary basis."

Several hundred visitors will be selected from each country for the trial scheme. But ministers plan to extend it to all visa types, including work and student visas and to all countries.

Keith Vaz MP, (pictured) chair of the home affairs select committee, said he will question home secretary Theresa May about the scheme on July 16.

The Labour MP said: "This flies in the face of the prime minister's intention to attract the brightest and best to Britain and sends out

the wrong message to the countries concerned. I am worried that the plans could potentially alienate already settled communities in the UK."

"If this is to be workable, she [May] must have a proper consultation. She said she wants to deter overstayers, yet with the mess that is E-Borders, there is currently no way to monitor if people actually leave the country."

"The bond level of £3,000 is completely unrealistic. If somebody was determined to work here illegally, this could be earned back in months."

Nausheen Khan is a mother-of-two from London who hails from India. She said: "On top of £100 for the visa, which is ₹8,000, it's crazy. I don't think [many people] will come now."

May said the deposit was key to her plans to reduce annual net migration to below 100,000 by 2015.

"This is the next step in making sure our immigration system is more selective, bringing down net migration from the hundreds of thousands to the tens of thousands while still welcoming the brightest and the best to Britain," she said.

"In the long run we're interested in a system of bonds that deters overstaying and recovers costs if a foreign national has used our public services."

■ THE spiritual head of a major Hindu temple in India was all smiles as he read a copy of *EE* last week. Sadguru Shastri Shree Madhav Priyadas Swami of the Swaminarayan Gurukul temple in Ahmedabad, Gujarat, was in London after a month-long tour of the country, meeting devotees in Cardiff, Leicester, Bolton and Harrow.

The spiritual leader flew to Washington last Thursday (20) to attend a three-day advanced education conference before returning to London in early July. The Swaminarayan Gurukul is hosting a Hindu lifestyle seminar from next Friday (5) to next Sunday (7) at the Shree Kutch Leva Patel Community Centre in north-west London, where Shastri Shree Madhav Priyadas will participate in a number of spiritual discourses.



Arrest in Dr Farooq murder case

A MAN was arrested at Heathrow airport in connection with the murder of an exiled Pakistani politician.

Counter-terrorism detectives arrested the 52-year-old on Monday (24) on suspicion of conspiring to murder Dr Imran Farooq.

Dr Farooq was stabbed to death outside his home in Edgware, London, in September 2010 when he was ambushed on his way home from work.

The man, who was arrested after landing on a flight from Canada, is in custody at a west London police station.

Dr Farooq was a prominent member of the Pakistani political party MQM (Muttahida Qaumi Movement) and had been living in exile in the UK for more than a decade.